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ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

CONTROL OF WEALTH

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In former times, the island as a whole apparently did not function in the control of land, reefs, or other native wealth. Today, however, there are on Wale five talo beds (*si*) which are controlled by the island. These are termed *ni wunua*. After the tidal wave of 1914, the Island Council divided some of the talo lands owned by the maternal lineages among all the people of the island in order to tide over a temporary food shortage. These lands have remained under the control of the whole island since that time. Their names are: Ui lua wunui (2 beds), Ui alapai, Ui kolonui, Ui angatonu.

In economic matters today as formerly, the ultimate controlling units are the village groups. These are independent of each other and may utilize their lands and reefs in any way they wish; in practice, however, they all conform to the same pattern of control.

VILLAGE PROPERTY

REEFS

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The barrier reef (*te ayanga loa*) and all fishing grounds on the reef, inside and outside the lagoon, are divided among the villages as follows:

The reef from Wale to Matautu, the northern point of Motu Ko, belongs to Ngake; no men or canoes other than those of Ngake are allowed on or near this part of the reef. The reef between Matawea, the western point of Motu Ko, and Motu Kotawa is divided into halves (*itu*), one half belonging to Ngake, the other to Yato. The reef fishing from Motu Kotawa to Wale belongs to Yato, but because lagoon fishing in former times was controlled by Ngake, the men of Yato could fish only outside this reef. Without permission from Ngake villagers men of Yato could not go to their reserve by canoe across the lagoon but had either to coast along the outside of the reef or to walk along the reef shelf. The outer, northern reef, running round the reserve of Niua (the northwestern side of Wale) as far as the boundary of the Loto reserve of Uta, was controlled by Yato; the outer reef from this point to the eastern boundary of Uta was controlled by Loto; the rest of the reef running past Utupoa to the main reef was controlled by Ngake. Each village had the right to the beach and lagoon fishing on its own shore (*tukutai*). The rest of the lagoon away from the village frontages belonged to Ngake.

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The control of reefs, though apparently weighted heavily against the village of Loto, worked with a certain flexibility. The men of Ngake announced at frequent intervals to the men of the other two villages that they might fish in the lagoon for one moon. At the end of the period the lagoon was tapu for all save Ngake men. All economic tapus (*lani*) were supported by supernatural sanctions. The two villages benefiting by this generosity took gifts of food, usually nuts and talo, to Ngake in payment for benefits received. Special gifts were sometimes given as when Yato made an expedition to Motu Kotawa and returned with extra supplies of *tuhupu* birds (tern).

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226 of the god and placed in the god house. These prayers for good luck survive today in the prayer meetings that are held in the several villages before the fleets set out for a fishing contest and in the prayers that are said at sea before the first line is thrown overboard. In the story of Pania (1) a fisherman gives some fish to his god after returning from an expedition, in order to thank him for his services. Informants were unable to state whether this was a common custom in former days.

226 A curious story is that of the man Taewa who became a successful fisherman even though he did not observe any of the fishing tapus:

Taewa tried many times to be a good fisherman, but without success. Disgusted with himself after many years of effort, he decided that the only way to improve his fortune was to circumcise himself. He was the first and only Pukapukan man to do this. With a clam shell, he made a longitudinal slit in the foreskin, then slashed the skin till it hung in tatters. The wounds healed, and ever after Taewa had good luck in fishing. So fortunate was he that he could afford to disobey all the fishing tapus without suffering any penalties from the gods. He named the Black Nebula below Crux, Te Puniwi, because the shape of the nebula reminded him of the shape of the *puniwi* fish. Some say that Taewa was protected by a spirit in this nebula when he broke tapus, though none knows how this protection was exercised. Others say his luck was due to the fact that he always fished when Te Puniwi rose above the horizon and not at any other time. None could explain the effect of his voluntary circumcision upon fishing luck.

225 There was no method of catching whales. When a whale was stranded on the reef, a call was sent through the three villages. The women rushed off to the talo beds to bring back talo which they prepared for the men who went to cut up the animal. The work of cutting up was supervised by a priest of Te Maungatu, the god who was supposed in some ill-defined way to control the stranding of whales. The blubber was divided among all the people of the island. The vertibrae were used as seats; no use seems to have been made of the whalebone.

SIMPLE METHODS

226 Ill-defined methods of fishing—stone throwing or stone clubbing, stepping on fish, hand scooping, and hand flipping—are employed only incidentally to other activities.

Stone throwing (*kauna ki te unata*) or stone clubbing (*patu ki te unata*) is performed by a man walking through the lagoon shallows who sees lagoon fish near by, often sleeping undisturbed at his approach. Fish killed by this method are yellow snapper, rock groupers, parrot fish, and flounders.

When a man fishing other lagoon fish comes across a flounder resting on the bottom, he makes a quick jab with his foot to pin down the fish, then picks it up, and kills it by biting it behind the head.

If a man sees a fish resting close by but can not find a stone or stick with which to kill it, he approaches quietly and, quickly dipping his hands into the water, scoops the fish onto the beach. This method is often successful with *tamoyei*, *tafangkau*, *tautau-*

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The dog was unknown in Pukapuka. The native rat (*Mus exulans*) was caught with the rat trap (*voka kiole*) when it became a pest in the talo beds but was never eaten. Rats were never hunted with weapons for sport.

Though many stories are told about cannibals, cannibalism was probably not practiced on Pukapuka. The use of human bone was tapu (*ʒa*), punishable by the goddess Tana (p. 309).

Meals and Food Etiquette

No routine of set meals is followed. The nature and number of meals eaten by one household group on any one day depend entirely on the amount of food on hand and the program of work for the day:

> If the men have been fishing early in the morning, the family has a meal of fish and *ipāpi* some time before 9 o'clock. If there has been no fishing and if there is no left-over supply of fish or talo, a regular meal is not eaten; each individual makes a fresh coconut or *uto* nut do. The Pukapukan feels no need for food before he starts work in the morning and may work until 10 or 11 o'clock without refreshment. A child going to school in the morning takes with him a drinking nut to eat as he walks along the road. A regular meal may not be eaten by a household for a whole day, sometimes even for the best part of two days. Before the second day has passed, fish is procured by some male member of the household and grilled for a formal meal, usually in the evening, not infrequently at 9 or 10 o'clock at night after the torch fishing. It was not unusual for us to be wakened in the middle of the night by a returning fisherman bringing us fish on the supposition that we would get up and eat it immediately. Our practice of eating at regular hours was always a matter of discussion and comment.

The words *kai, taumamaya, yomuyomu, lamulamu* apply to eating, whether by an individual alone or by a group, whether of a single coconut or of an elaborate meal. There is no Pukapukan word for guest or host, nor is there any custom of entertaining friends or relatives for an occasional meal in the household. Special indebtedness is repaid by sending food gifts to the home of the friend.

Whether the meal is taken inside the cook house or outside on the open ground—as is usual for a meal on a fine evening—men, women, and children all sit on coconut-leaf (*takapau*) mats, with crossed legs tucked under them. They sit in rows opposite each other. The food platters (*laulau*) are set (*wakalaulaua*) on *polapola* coconut mats in the middle. It is customary to rise and leave the group when satisfied (*yangia*). The food is taken from the center platters with the fingers in individual mouthfuls. Food etiquette is remarkable by its absence. There are no rules taught to the child on the correct way to eat food. There is no prescribed manner of chewing. Loud sucking, belching, gurgling, and loud smacking of the lips are all in good taste. The food may be packed into the mouth in any fashion. As it is divided into individual shares on the platters before being served, there is no opportunity for the quick eater to obtain more than his share of food.

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and then allowed to lie about until they are needed as waste cloth. The soiled sleeping mats of adults may never be used by children, lest they be made sick by contact with the stains. There is no other precaution adopted about sleeping mats or sitting mats; these are used by members of the household or visitors.

GHOSTS

The fear of ghosts (*aitu*, old term; *yitolo*, modern term) is all-pervading in Pukapuka. Not only children, who are brought up with a fear of ghosts, but adults also are thoroughly afraid of them and their power. Children are never left alone in the night lest ghosts worry them. In times of sickness, ghosts are supposed to be particularly troublesome, and it is necessary at these times to be especially careful of the well-being of ailing children, who are not left unguarded even during the day. Ghosts are believed to cause sickness.

SICKNESS AND HYGIENE

IDEOLOGY

The Pukapukan had no conception of the physical causation of sickness or physical disability, unrelated to immoral, sacrilegious, or antisocial behavior of the afflicted individual or his relatives. Sickness was sent by gods or by malicious spirits (*aitu*), in order to punish or revenge the breaking of a tapu, or other antisocial behavior. Punishment by sickness was considered perfectly just, even though the sick person had himself committed no infraction of tapu; all the members of the guilty one's family or household group were jointly responsible.

Types of antisocial behavior punished by sickness were infractions of the following: economic tapus, through non-observance or stealing; rules governing the disposal of property at death or general economic contracts; rules governing the treatment of wife, children, relatives, and old people; sexual tapus, committing of incest, adultery; obligations based on kinship or friendship relations; and tapus on religious or ceremonial objects and structures. Deaths caused by suicide or homicide, or resulting from injuries received in homicidal encounters were the only ones for which a material cause, unaffected by spiritual interference, was recognized. Even here, however, a closer analysis would probably show that death or injury was due to the withdrawal of protection by the god from one of his worshipers because the worshiper had at some time violated rules.

Sickness in general was *maki atua* (god-sent sickness). Special names for types of sickness sent by gods, were: *maki hai kiko*, sickness caused by incest; *maki atua kino*, sickness caused by ancestral spirits. No single word applies to accidental injury, which is given a descriptive term, as *maki no te yuuruga o te atua ki lalo*, sickness resulting from a fall from a tree caused by a god.